

Such is man and nature. Though part of the creation, man stands infinitely distinct from it as in the image of God. As distinct from the impersonal machine, man maintains his glory but to be merely part of nature, all of the glory of man, mind, reason, conscience, soul, and will, merely become biological phenomena. The loftiness and magic of 'man' is lost in the machine of nature.

"King David wrote, 'When I consider the heavens and the works of Thy hands what is man that Thou art mindful of him? Yet Thou has made him for a little while lower than the angels. Thou dost crown him with glory and majesty and Thou dost appoint him over the works of Thy hands.' And these are the 'hands' that America has rejected.

"Man without God is a cosmic orphan with no one who gives him meaning, care, or hope of redemption or life after death. There is no way, truth, or life without God.

John 3:16 evaporates in that circumstance. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"Man may 'act' atheistic, wise and secular, but he cannot 'react' as an atheist. As soon as he is sinned against and done unjustly, he becomes a Puritan longing for an injustice to receive absolute retribution. Without God the only thing man can feel guilty about is guilt. Guilt assumes transgression, and transgression assumes law that assumes God. Without God there can be no final law, guilt, or true government. No civility to build a civilization. No 'cult' or religious rules to build 'culture'.

"We cannot legislate a return to truth. One hundred and fifty years of governmental, academic, artistic, scientific, philosophic, moral, domestic, medical, education, and judicial denial cannot be naturally fixed. We are beyond hope for a return. We are too stubborn, and too proud, and too self-centered, and too indulged.

"Our only hope is the divine reprieve of Nineveh in the day of Jonah. A prophet who rose from the dead promised life or destruction in 40 days upon their response to his prophecy of destruction. From the king to the people and even to the animals, a fast was called for and all wore sackcloth. The disaster was averted, and so it is now. Prophets who rise from the dead after 3 days and nights are not to be disregarded.

"If indeed man, has judged rightly for 20 centuries that there is an infinite and personal God who has revealed Himself in the Bible, the foundation of history's greatest culture, who raised His son from the dead to offer man repentance and salvation, and if he is indeed a God of wrath upon those countries who hold Him in contempt . . . then our country revels today in the shadow of Vesuvius.

"Jeremiah 48:42, 'Moab will be destroyed from being a people because he has magnified himself against the Lord'.

"Icarus may fly high with his wings of wax, but should Hubris carry him too high, his wings will melt, his feathers fly to the wind, and he shall come to a violent end.

May those who have ears to hear, take heed, repent and reform accordingly."

Tommy Nelson has profound truth that he has provided, but that is because it comes from truth beyond him, which he readily acknowledges.

Dostoevsky was quoted by Solzhenitsyn. I had not seen the quote before Solzhenitsyn used it in *The Gulag Archipelago*. Dostoevsky was taking on the crazy ideas of this nut named Marx, a sad man, sad family, who couldn't even foresee the formation of unions.

Dostoevsky said that the big problem with Marxism is not economic. Obviously, that is a problem. They always go broke eventually. The problem with Marxism is atheism.

I hear some of my colleagues talk about how wonderful progressivism is. That is the new term for Marxism; how great it will be when everybody shares and shares alike.

But as Khrushchev found when he set up a commission to come up with a plan of how you move to true communism, where there is no government, everybody shares and shares alike, he ended up disbanding the commission because there is no way to ever get to a place; until the Messiah comes, it won't happen because you have got to have a totalitarian government that takes away everybody's rights and tells them what they will be allowed to do and not do, and that government becomes the God. That is what Dostoevsky was saying.

So, I won't be back next year. I will be back in 2 weeks and the week after that.

Madam Speaker, I continue to have hope that springs eternal in the human breast that we won't lose the greatest freedom, the greatest country, the greatest gift of a country any people has ever received, that it will not be our generation that sees it lost.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1530

REFLECTIONS ON CONGRESSIONAL SERVICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND) for 30 minutes.

Mr. KIND. Madam Speaker, on a lighter note, this will be one of the last opportunities that I will have to address this Chamber as Representative of the people of the Third Congressional District of western and north central Wisconsin.

It has truly been the honor of my life, but Tawni and I decided last summer that it shouldn't be the honor for our entire lives, so we decided to make this our last term after 26 years of serving the people back home.

As a kid growing up on the north side of La Crosse, Madam Speaker, if someone had told me, the son of a telephone repairman, that I would one day be serving in a place like the United States Congress, I would have thought they were crazy.

I thought this was a place where only the politically connected, the Kennedys, the Rockefellers, or those with great wealth, would come to. I guess I am a living example that if you want to serve your Nation, there are still opportunities to do so at all levels.

I had a chance to cut my political teeth as a college undergrad with one of my political icons and heroes back home, Senator Bill Proxmire.

From him, I learned the importance of fiscal responsibility, something that I have tried to practice each year in Congress, tried to instill in my colleagues, the need for us to balance our books.

I was a big advocate back in the 1990s when I joined this Congress for pay-as-you-go budgeting rules, which is a simple concept. It just means that if you are going to have a spending increase or a tax cut, you have to find an offset in the budget to pay for it in order to maintain that balance.

Then, if you are able to hit the sweet spot with strong economic growth, increased worker productivity, and with that comes increased revenue to the Treasury, you can actually not only balance budgets but run some surpluses, something that the second term of the Clinton administration demonstrated with 4 consecutive years of budget surpluses where we were actually paying down the national debt rather than adding to it.

But in my humble opinion, Madam Speaker, I believe I have represented the most beautiful congressional district in the Nation. Throughout western Wisconsin, in an area called the Driftless Area, where the glaciers missed, we have such beautiful natural resources.

I have more miles that border the Mississippi River than any other congressional district in the Nation, so I took it upon myself as a particular duty and responsibility to do what I could to better protect and preserve the Mississippi River and the watershed basin for future generations.

It is a huge source of tourism, outdoor recreation, and commercial navigation, which is vital to the economy and the quality of life in the upper Midwest.

I am proud that when I first got here back in 1997, I helped form the first bipartisan Mississippi River Caucus. We were able to do some good work, Republicans and Democrats working together, to manage river issues and make sure that we approached it as one

continuous ecosystem rather than just a northern and southern Mississippi area.

We have a lot of rivers, a lot of lakes, beautiful bluffs and hills and coulees that people enjoy back home.

More importantly, it has been such an honor to represent the people of the district: good, honest, hardworking, salt of the earth.

I have seen time and time again over these last 26 years, when a community got hit with a natural disaster—for us in western Wisconsin, it was typically bad flooding that hit people in their communities and flooded their homes and businesses. I saw people rally, and there weren't labels. It wasn't Republicans or Democrats or Independents or whatever. It was just, hey, we need to help our neighbor and get through this. It was demonstrated time and time again.

I also saw, through the years, how communities rally for our fallen heroes on the battlefield. People over the last year, knowing that I was going to be stepping down at the end of this term, have asked me: What was the most difficult part of your job serving in Congress?

Besides the obvious, the amount of time that you have to be away from and sacrifice from your family, those missed opportunities, clearly, the most difficult part of this job is receiving that phone call from the Pentagon and then having to deliver that message to the family back home that their loved one has just fallen on the field of battle, and how absolutely soul-crushing that is to have to deliver that message and hear the family's reaction to it and then go to that soldier's funeral in the community.

But it was also inspiring, seeing how the community rallied around that family and truly honored that fallen hero at the time—27 of them, unfortunately, in my congressional district alone, from the deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan.

On the other hand, people have asked me what has been one of my prouder accomplishments as a Member of Congress. I tell them it wasn't anything particular that I did or a piece of legislation that I may have drafted and passed or some type of project back home that I was able to help complete. It was more the opportunity I had as a Member of Congress representing the people back home to go travel and be with our troops in the field, seeing what our fine young men and women in uniform do for us each and every day.

We send them off to these faraway battlefields with strange-sounding names and weird histories and conflicts that are centuries old, and we ask them to perform incredibly dangerous and difficult missions, and they do it.

They are so well trained. They are so well motivated. They are the best our Nation has to offer.

It is just inspiring, being in their presence, especially the five times I went to Iraq, the six times I was in Af-

ghanistan, the one time I went to Kosovo at the height of that air war in the late 1990s, seeing the job they do for us.

There is no other Nation in the world that can do what our military does. They do it with decency, and they do it by abiding by the Geneva Convention. That is something that the world expects of us.

We have well-trained and well-motivated men and women on our behalf securing our freedom and our liberties but also advancing the cause of peace throughout the world.

I just wish everyone, as a citizen of this country, could see and go do the things that I did in meeting with our troops in the field.

That clearly is the proudest moment. I have never been prouder to be an American than during those opportunities to be with them.

I have enjoyed the committee assignments that I have had through the years. Initially, when I came to Congress, I was assigned to the Natural Resources Committee. Of course, with all the work we were doing for the Mississippi River, I have been one of the cochairs of the National Park Caucus for a number of years now—truly, America's greatest idea.

It is kind of neat to think that that democratizing principle that we created in the National Park System, that just because we were citizens of this great Nation, all of us are co-owners of some of the most beautiful and most expensive real estate in the entire world, our national parks.

They are calling for us to visit. They are beautiful places. I fell in love with them as a kid, and I wanted to pass that on to my family and my children. So, every August during our recess here in Congress, I take the family to a different national park where I can meet with the superintendents and the park personnel and get a park briefing. But I also took the family out in the back country, where we went backpacking.

We started that when the boys were just toddlers and could just barely carry their own sleeping bags. But as they got older and stronger, Tawni and I tended to load down their backpacks more and more, and that made backpacking a lot easier on us.

I encourage our citizens to take advantage of the great national parks we have, the national wildlife refuges that we have.

I also helped form and cochair the National Wildlife Refuge Caucus, having three of the most beautiful ones in my congressional district as well. They are objects of splendor, meant for us to enjoy and utilize.

I also served on the Education and Labor Committee. I represent 6 of the 11 State universities in Wisconsin, 4 of the greatest technical schools that we have. I made it a priority to focus on access to the affordability of higher education, making sure that those doors remain open to all of our kids,

regardless of their socioeconomic background.

I was one of the champions of the need-based financial aid programs because I benefited from that myself. Again, as a kid of a telephone repairman, I was the first generation to go on to school.

My family didn't have the resources to send me to college, let alone technical school, but through a combination of student loans, the work-study program, and I qualified for a Pell grant being a low-income student, I was able to make it work financially.

In fact, I think I still hold the undergraduate career for the most toilets cleaned in a 4-year span. It was the most disgusting job on campus, but it paid the best through work-study, so I was willing to do that 2 hours a day, every year, for 4 years in college while I was still trying to play college football and all that other stuff that I wanted to do.

I wanted to make sure those programs continued and were strengthened for the next generation because I didn't want to be one of those Representatives that pulls the ladder up behind me and tells the next generation, "Tough luck. You are on your own."

It is one of the wisest investments we can make as a Nation in our youth, expanding those educational opportunities, because the truth is, the jobs of the future are going to put a premium on higher education learning. I mean, that is just the way the world and the global economy are today. We have to expand that access.

The work we did on committee, too, for workforce development and worker safety issues, I am very proud of that.

I served on the Budget Committee for a number of years. I had a short stint on the Agriculture Committee. I was one of the leading voices on farm bill reform. I tried to move away from these huge taxpayer subsidies that were going to a few but very large agribusinesses, very much at the expense of our family farmers. I have been proud to be able to represent a large rural area in Wisconsin where farming, family farming, is a key component of our economy.

Wisconsin is the Dairy State. Cheese—everyone is kind of familiar with that, and we wear that label proudly.

It has been really neat throughout the years to go out on the family farms and visit with those farm families and see the incredible work they do for us to enable our food security, something that we, as Americans, kind of take for granted. Yet, we shouldn't because farming is tough: the ups and downs of commodity prices, the expenses, the fixed costs that they face.

The last year or so has been particularly difficult with the increase in fuel and fertilizer that they have without a corresponding increase in commodity prices.

It is a hard business, especially if you are a dairy farmer because that is 24/7.

Cows have to be milked every day. You don't have the luxury of being able to step away for a few days at a time. There are challenges there that I tried to understand and tried to address in my role as Representative of one of the larger dairy-producing districts in the Nation.

I especially enjoyed my time as a member of the Ways and Means Committee over the last 16 years. It is the only committee that is constitutionally mandated. In the early years of our Republic, it was the only committee that Congress had. Then, finally, it was starting to get piecemealed and torn apart and that, but we still have incredible jurisdiction over most of the economic issues: obviously, the tax code; trade policy; Social Security and Medicare; healthcare policy.

It has been fun working in that committee and working with my colleagues to try to develop good policy that makes sense for our country. The work I especially focused on is healthcare reform, trying to implement a value-based system so that we are actually paying for the quality of care that is given to us and not the volume of care, not the tests and procedures and things that are done to us without any results, but making sure that we are getting value out of the dollars that are spent.

I still believe that is going to be one of the keys to healthcare reform in our country, moving to that value, that quality-based outcome system that we need.

I benefited from having some of the best healthcare providers in the world operating in my congressional district: the Gundersen Health System, the Mayo Clinic Health System.

I think I still have more Mayo doctors in my congressional district throughout western Wisconsin than they even do in Minnesota or other places in the country, the Marshfields and the Auroras and the ThedaCares. We are very lucky in the State of Wisconsin to have such quality providers.

But, clearly, healthcare is still too expensive. We need to continue to think creatively on how we can bring those costs down and make sure that it is accessible for all of our citizens.

I was proud of being able to create the Veterans History Project. This is an attempt to record our veterans' stories before it is too late and they pass away because I believe it is an important part of American history that needs to be preserved.

I teamed up with Amo Houghton, a Republican friend, back when he was a Marine. We introduced the legislation on the House side. We teamed up with Max Cleland and Chuck Hagel on the Senate side. I think we still have the record for the shortest period of time from when a bill was introduced to when it was signed into law by Bill Clinton because, every once in a while, the urgency—at the time, it was the World War II generation that was pass-

ing away at 2,000 a day. We wanted to get this program up and going in order to start capturing their stories.

We are archiving it at the world's greatest library, the Library of Congress. They have done a tremendous job of handling that program and collecting all of these stories, digitizing them now, making them available on the internet for everyone to access, but especially our younger generation.

What gave me the idea to create the Veterans History Project—and I am proud to report today we have over 120,000 of these veterans' stories collected nationwide. Now, we are shifting the focus to the Vietnam generation, who are starting to pass away because they are getting up there in age, too.

What gave me the spark to create it was Father's Day weekend. I was out at the picnic table with my dad, Korea generation, and my uncle, his brother, Donnie, who flew bomber missions in the Pacific during the Second World War. For the first time, they started talking to me about their experience. I said, holy cow, and I told them to stop as I ran into the house and got the family video camera and then came out and set it up. My two boys were just toddlers at the time, and I wanted them, when they were old enough to appreciate it, to be able to hear it from their grandfather and their great-uncle.

I came back to Washington that next week and said, given the technology that is available today, we need to be doing this nationwide. So, we quickly drafted the legislation, moved it through both Chambers, and got it implemented into law.

It has been a lot of fun being able to not only interview our veterans but seeing this program grow and the history that we are preserving so future generations never forget the type of service and sacrifice that came before them.

□ 1545

I did a lot of work on the veteran front, obviously, trying to ease their transition from Iraq, Afghanistan, to back home. We had 2 million of them coming home with special needs, physical and mental, that still needs to be addressed.

At the VA hospital in my district, I spent a lot of time making sure we had better coordination of care and better outcome of care for our veterans. More needs to be done on that front. It is a promise our Nation has to live up to, given the type of service and sacrifice that these men and women do for us.

I was also co-chairing the Rural Healthcare Caucus. Obviously, as a Representative of a lot of rural providers in my district, I teamed up with CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS for a number of years to make sure that our rural providers had a voice when it came to healthcare policy, given the unique challenges that they face with recruitment, retention, and just those rural settings generally, and the type of obstacles that we have to overcome.

In many cases, these rural hospitals are the anchor of these rural communities. If they lose it, it has huge economic impact, and it also makes it very difficult then for the people in that region to access the type of quality healthcare that they need.

When I first got here, I helped form the New Democratic Coalition. It was back in '97 with Cal Dooley, Tim Roemer, Jim Moran, and others, who felt that we needed to try to restore the sensible center in Congress with a pragmatic group of House Members who could get together on a weekly basis, figure out how we can complement each other's work, but also figure out ways of building bridges rather than tearing them down around here, form those crucial bipartisan relationships to get things done, working closely with the Clinton administration initially and then subsequent administrations.

I got the honor of chairing the New Democrat Coalition for 4 years. Today, I think we are close to 100 Members in the Democrat Coalition, great Members, hardworking, earnest, again, those trying to build bridges and get things done around here. I think that group has a lot of hope and promise in the coming Congress now of finding the relevancy and finding those crucial relationships across the aisle that we need in order to advance the issues and the policies that benefit our Nation.

I know I am leaving that New Democrat Coalition in very good with hands with the young, bright, talented leadership that has come up now and taken over the reins.

Also, I had some good mentors as I was growing up. I mentioned Senator Bill Proxmire, who I had a chance to intern for, wrote many of his speeches about the need for the Senate to ratify the antigenocide treaty.

He was one of the first sounding the alarm about fiscal irresponsibility and how we have a responsibility as Representatives to be good stewards of the dollar.

Also, Senator Gaylord Nelson from Wisconsin, one of my heroes, one of the great conservationists of all time, not just in Congress but for the country and for the world. Here is a guy who grew up in a 400-person town called Clear Lake and later became Governor of Wisconsin, Senator from Wisconsin, and the father of Earth Day, a day that we commemorate every year about the need to protect our vital natural resources across the globe, celebrated in 144 nations today. It is a great story of how one person can make a difference, especially a small-town kid from northern Wisconsin and the impact that he left behind with his legacy.

So, obviously, you can't do all of this. This job is too big for one individual. Everyone here, all of my colleagues know the truth in the statement that you are only as good as the people you surround yourself with. I have been so blessed and so lucky throughout the years to have the best

staff that any Member could hope for, whether it was here in Washington or back home in my district offices. These are incredible individuals, typically young, hardworking, smart, just trying to do the best they can servicing people back home, whether it was the legislation that we worked on together here or the casework that my district office staff members would do.

Nothing brought me greater joy than traveling around the congressional district, having people come up and say: Ron, I have got to thank you and your office because of what you did for me or a family member, whether it was a veteran's issue or a lost Social Security check or some farm program that a family farmer was trying to access. I mean, the list goes on and on and on. I give all the credit and all the laurels to my staff for the job that they did throughout the years.

I had wonderful chiefs of staff, from Cindy, Erik, Travis, Mike, Hannah, and Alex, who ran a tight ship and just created a great atmosphere for all of us to work in. They were true partners through all of this.

I had two wonderful district directors back home: Lauren Kannenberg, who I recruited as a principal out of a Catholic high school to be my district office manager way back when, and later Karrie Jacqueline, who were able to manage those offices and the outreach that we ask our staff to do and to report back to us so that we stay in constant touch and communication, if we are not out on the road ourselves meeting with people back in the community.

The committee staff is just tremendous, the work that they put in, how helpful they are to us as individual Members, but also to our staff people. The people we have serving here on the floor, they are the ones that are behind the scenes, but they try to bring some function to the dysfunction that occurs too often in this place. We couldn't do it without them. It is the kind of seamless energy that they bring to making the trains run on time and just doing the basics for us to be able to do our job.

We have an official reporter right now taking down my words. They never get to say a word when they are here, but I know how important their job is as the guardian of the public record. Somehow they do it so well, even when we are yelling over each other in heated debates and trying to get all of that down. It is not an easy job. I know this personally because my wife is an official court reporter for a judge back home. I know the type of skill that it takes to perform these duties. I just want to thank them for their service to our Nation.

The Capitol Hill police. Obviously, January 6 is going to go down as a dark mark in American history. It was our Capitol Hill police that were the true vanguard of making sure that it didn't get uglier or deadlier than it did that day.

I mention these kinds of ancillary personnel who make Capitol Hill run, because through the years—and for me, 26 years—you get to know these people as individuals and as human beings and develop those friendships. It is something that I will truly miss.

Bob and Rose in our cloakroom, who keep us so well informed of what is happening all the time and what the schedule is and what we should anticipate, those types of relationships you are never going to forget.

I also benefited throughout the years in one of those competitive swing districts. I love the fact that my district was 50/50. We have too few of those districts today with gerrymandering where it is overwhelmingly Republican or overwhelmingly Democrat. That wasn't the case in my district. My district has always been about one-third, one-third, and one-third in registration. That forced me to play it down the middle and to understand that I was going to be taking incoming from the far right and the far left. I always reminded my staff to not worry about that, because that is not where are our district is. In fact, if I wasn't taking incoming from the far, far right and the far, far left, I probably wasn't doing a good job of adequately representing the people in the district that I had.

It was such a joy, because they did place their trust and confidence in me to make good decisions on their behalf, even though a lot of them will tell you they had disagreements with me throughout the years. But I think they saw the hard work we put in and the honesty and civility that I tried to bring to this job. It was a great congressional district to represent.

But I couldn't have gotten here without the help of my campaign staff, the campaign managers throughout the years, the staff, the fieldworkers, the volunteers, the supporters, the friends, people like Wally Capper, Paul Barkla, Bob Welsh, Nancy Johnson, Vicki Burke, Margaret Wood. These are the people who have enough belief and trust in you that they are willing to give you one of the most precious things that we own as human beings and that is our own time. They were, time and again, campaign after campaign, always there helping out and pitching in. That is true for thousands of people back home who supported me throughout the years.

They not only made it possible for me to win in a very competitive district, but they also made it fun. Because as candidates going through tough campaigns, it means a lot knowing that you have a lot of friends and a lot of supporters who have your back and care about you and care about the outcome of our democracy. They have been terrific.

Most of all, I thank my family. It starts there and it ends there, especially my soulmate and my partner in all this, my wife, Tawni. I don't know how she did it. When we first ran, our

first son, Johnny, was born just a few days before our primary. In the midst of that chaos, the first congressional campaign, with everything swirling around, suddenly we have a little boy in our arms. Boy, you talk about a life moment that just brings it down to the basics. At that point, when he was delivered, nothing else mattered. We win, we lose, it didn't matter; we have this beautiful little boy in our arms now. He was such a stabilizing force.

Then 2 years later came Matt. How she did it all of those years with me running back and forth every weekend, back to the district, coming out here for my duties in Washington. I am home representing a 19-county, large rural area, constantly on the road, getting out into the communities that I represent. So most of this fell on her to raise two beautiful sons, who are doing incredible things right now. She and I couldn't be more proud of Johnny and Matt.

They were born into this racket. It is kind of weird for them knowing dad is stepping down, because this life of me serving in Congress is all they have known. In fact, for a while, when they were little guys and Tawni would drop me off at the airport, they literally thought my job was getting on a plane and flying overhead all week and then landing, because they would come and pick me up then. Every time they saw a plane go by, "Oh, there's daddy." Then they started tuning in to C-SPAN and seeing me engaged in debates on the floor. Wait a minute: What is going on here? They started figuring it out. I couldn't have done it without Tawni's support and partnership and the kids.

So many times I had to be away from them, but there were also fun family events we could do, too, in the course of my duties. Parades, we lost count at about 1,500. I started losing the boys when they became teenagers, after about 1,200 parades that they did. County fairs, they would go along with me, the great dairy breakfasts that we have back home in Wisconsin during the summertime where we visit dairy families, have great breakfasts, community events, everyone coming together. So there were a lot of fun, enjoyable things we could do as a family that overlapped with my official duties. They never complained, even though it probably would have been more fun for them to be doing something else or hanging out with their friends.

Now, I am proud to say that Johnny, after playing college football, is with an engineering firm in La Crosse, doing great work there, we couldn't be prouder.

Our son Matt, after graduating Harvard, immediately signed up for officer candidate school at Quantico, and now he is an infantry commander for the Marines at Camp Lejeune. Yes, they fixed the water problem down at Camp Lejeune, after seeing all of those ads on TV lately. That is what they have been able to do.

Tawni and I are very, very lucky to have those two sons and the type of young men and citizens that they have become.

I would also be remiss if I didn't mention our "third son" whom we didn't adopt, Oscar, who is an exchange student, who came and lived with us throughout his high school years, going to school with our boys. He went to Madison UW. He is working at Epic now and applying to med school. He is from Luoyang, China. He is just a great kid. He is home for the holidays with us and does family vacations with us and goes backpacking with us. That has been a lot of fun, too.

It has been quite the ride. Obviously, many, many people made this happen. I feel very blessed and very fortunate having the opportunity to be able to represent such a neat, beautiful area with some great people and families back home in Wisconsin.

We are looking forward to the next chapter. We don't know what that is yet. No final decisions have been made. But Tawni and I are going to be looking for new ways of being able to contribute to the community and being able to support our democracy.

As I leave here today, just a note of caution. The type of polarization that we are experiencing right now in this country, the hyperpartisanship, is not healthy. The key to the survival of any democracy is the ability to compromise. It is the give and take. It is being able to reach out across the aisle to a good friend, like DAVE SCHWEIKERT, who is on the Committee on Ways and Means with us and find some issues that we can work on together and try to advance. That is the only way this place is going to survive. It is the only way our country and democracy are going to be able to survive.

□ 1600

Unfortunately, in recent years, people getting involved in politics are looking at the other side not as reasonable people that you can disagree with and have heated debates about the best course of action for the future of our country, but the enemy that needs to be destroyed.

These campaigns are getting uglier, and they are getting nastier, and the division is growing, which is leading to events like we had here on Capitol Hill on January 6. This can't continue.

One of my prouder achievements that I tell people back home is, I have been consistently ranked as one of the most bipartisan Members of Congress through the surveys that are taken, the bills I introduce, the legislation we advance, who I am working with across the aisle. I wear that as a badge of honor, not as something to be ashamed of or run away from.

Too many of my colleagues now fear that if they are seen working with a Democrat or working with a Republican, someone on the other side, that would be the kiss of death for them in

their primary back home. That is not the way this place is set up to function.

We have got to figure out a way to fight through this bad era of American politics and remind ourselves that, ultimately, at the end of the day, we are all Americans with a commonality that can't separate us. We cannot be enemies.

We need to find a way forward of healing the division and the partisanship that has poisoned our politics and the alternate realities that are being created today through many different mediums because if you don't have that basic commonality of what the facts and what the truth are, there is no way you are going to be able to reach agreement on some of the tough issues facing our country. I mean, the separation, the gulf will be too great.

I didn't mean to lecture my colleagues here or future Representatives to this place, but it is an issue that we have to stay focused on.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the recognition, the honor of being able to address this Chamber for one of my last times and to thank, ultimately, the people in the Third Congressional District for the trust and the responsibility that they placed in me these past 26 years.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Byrd, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with amendments in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 2617. An act to amend section 1115 of title 31, United States Code, to amend the description of how performance goals are achieved, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 4834. An act to reauthorize the National Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program.

The message also announced that the Senate has agreed to a joint resolution of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S.J. Res. 63 Joint Resolution relating to a national emergency declared by the President on March 13, 2020.

THE MATH ALWAYS WINS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. Sekewickert) for 30 minutes.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Madam Speaker, RON is one of the good guys. For those of us who are blessed to be on the Ways and Means Committee, many times it is one of those committees where you have to do adult stuff that affects not only this country but the world. Having people that you can talk to and

work it through with is important. RON is going to be missed. I thank him for being one of the good guys.

Madam Speaker, this is going to be sort of a two-parter. I am going to come back in 2 weeks and provide solutions, but right now I need to define the problem.

As you know, right now around the Capitol complex, we have dozens and dozens of brand-new Members and hundreds of potentially new staffers. They are all trying to find their office and which way is up and where the bathrooms are; I mean, all the things we go through when we are brand-new around here.

My fear is no one is telling these Members that are new—and even talking to the Members who have been here a while—the truth. The truth is the math, and the math always wins.

We are in real trouble. What scares me is with some of the things going on in the economy right now, with where interest rates look like they are going, with inflation now becoming structural, it is potentially just devastating to the individuals out there, our brothers and sisters in the country, just the affordability, being able to afford a house, food, but you have got to understand what it also means to the stability of this country.

Let's actually walk through it. Some of this is big-boy math, it is going to be complex, but there are a couple punch lines in here I want to be remembered.

I am not going to take you back to 1965, but let's do last year. This is last year's budget cycle. Understand, over 71 percent of all of our spending is on autopilot. The fact of the matter is this is what we call mandatory. Only 13 percent was defense, 16 percent was discretionary, what we functionally debate here which we really fight over.

But this mandatory here, you see red, your government functionally is an insurance company with an army. This is health, Medicare, Social Security, other benefits, pensions for military, for government workers, those sorts of things. This is mandatory. And it is on autopilot.

I don't think there is a Member here who has ever ultimately voted on this red portion. It is a formula. You turn 65, you get certain benefits. You serve in the military a certain amount of time, you get certain benefits. It is autopilot.

Defense, well, that we debate, we work through, but the fact of the matter is defense sort of stays within a certain mean of the GDP.

And then domestic. The crazy thing, domestic, actually, as a percentage of GDP, at the end of a decade will be flat.

So where is all this debt coming from? Where is all this growth coming from?

I am going to give you an answer, and it is going to make people really unhappy. You need to understand, when we talk about just last year's borrowing, does anyone out there understand how big it was?